



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, Ct. 06067
(860) 257-8066 (telephone)
(860) 257-8074 (fax)

Sherry Ostrout, MSW, CMC, President
Stephen A. Karp, MSW, Executive Director
www.naswct.org

**Public Health Committee
Public Hearing
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HB5286

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Ashley Mouta and I am a social work student at Saint Joseph College. I am testifying today on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter, in support of HB5286; An Act Concerning Licensure of Master and Clinical Social Workers. A Masters level license would be a benefit to not only the social work profession, but to clients and the general public as well.

Masters in social work (MSW) graduates often face the Catch-22 that many social work positions require a license. However, workers are unable to obtain this license without a certain amount of supervised practice hours. This becomes an issue because workers are unable to find a position where they can accumulate experience. Many social workers leave Connecticut to practice in other states where they can obtain their license soon after graduation. I have seen this first hand in my studies at Saint Joseph College. Most of my peers are going out of state to study for their MSW so they can take their licensure exam and find work directly after graduation. Enacting a licensure for MSW graduates would not only increase job opportunities for social work professionals, it would also benefit the state.

Connecticut should pass this legislation to create a masters level licensure and join the 45 states and the District of Columbia that have already done so. All of Connecticut's neighboring states have passed an MSW license. Enacting this legislation in Connecticut would help us compete with other states to keep social workers in the work force. A Masters level license would generate up to \$406,000 in the first year enacted and \$187,000 in annual revenue. This would contribute to reversing the states deficit and improving the economic climate overall.

It is important to note that social workers and the state are not the only beneficiaries of this legislation. An MSW license would ensure that clients are working with qualified and competent individuals and are receiving the level of care they deserve, the only way to ensure this level of care is to have a licensed workforce. Licensing social workers adds a level of consumer protection for clients. If a social worker is not licensed, policing and punishment of unethical practice becomes difficult. Licensing workers creates accountability measures to hold workers responsible if they are not acting in accordance with the principles of the profession. If a worker behaves unethically in private practice and is not licensed, there is no authoritative entity for a client to report to, ensuring the worker is held accountable for their actions. If a worker is licensed a client can complain to the licensing board and a worker and would be reprimanded in response to their actions. This helps protect clients and inhibit unprofessional practice in the field.

It is beneficial to social workers, the state, and the clients to pass HB5286 because it will improve the condition of social work practice in Connecticut. Enacting an MSW licensure will help Connecticut retain talented and qualified social workers in the work force. They will be able to obtain the license needed to practice in certain clinical settings. In addition to this, the social work profession would gain from increased licensure as it will help professionalize the work force and ensure qualified and competent individuals are

representing the field. Licensure is beneficial to the general public as it will be a source of much needed revenue for the state. Clients would benefit from this bill as it will give them increased consumer protection against malpractice.

Thank you all for your time and consideration.